

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9160
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GENEVA 06728

HONG KONG ALSO FOR INS DIDIR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: MACAU TRANSIT CENTER FOR INDOCHINESE BOAT
REFUGEES

1. ON MAY 2, MISSION, IN ACCORDANCE PARA 1 REF (A),
SPOKE TO DEPUTY UNHCR MACE.
2. MACE, WHO HAD BEEN ALERTED TO PROBLEM PREVIOUSLY
BY MISSION, IMMEDIATELY PROVIDED COPY OF "NOTE FOR THE
FILE," PREPARED BY SAMPATKUMAR ON THIS SUBJECT, WHICH WILL
BE DISCUSSED AT UNHCR CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE BEING
HELD HERE THIS WEEK. NOTE IS CONSIDERED OF SUFFICIENT
IMPORTANCE TO SUBJECT THAT WE QUOTE IT BELOW IN
PARAPHRASE. (ADDRESSEES REQUESTED TO PROTECT MACE AS
SOURCE OF THIS INTERNAL DOCUMENT.)

BEGIN PARAPHRASE

A. MAIN PURPOSE OF APRIL 21-26 TRIP TO HONG KONG WAS TO
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LOOK INTO ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM CREATED BY UNUSUALLY
LARGE NUMBER OF RECENT VIETNAMESE ARRIVALS. SIMILAR
SITUATION DEVELOPED LAST YEAR BUT PROBLEM RESOLVED
WHEN SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS LEFT FOR THIRD COUNTRY RESETTLE-
MENT.

B. SINGAPORE HOTE, MAIN HOUSING FOR BOAT PEOPLE SINCE

1976, HAS DECIDED NOT TO ACCOMMODATE VIETNAMESE ANY LONGER, MAYFAIR AND MOVIELAND HOTELS WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER SERVICES. RECENTLY IRC HOSTEL AGREED TO ACCOMMODATE BOAT PEOPLE TO EXTENT ROOMS NOT OCCUPIED BY CHINESE REFUGEES FOR WHOM HOSTEL INTENDED (ACCOMMODATES 42 PERSONS). PRESENTLY UP TO 500 VIETNAMESE CAN BE ACCOMMODATED IN THESE THREE LOCATIONS.

C. WHEN RECENT SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN NUMBER OF BOATS AND SHIPS ARRIVED HONG KONG WITH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES, ICEM HONG KONG, ACTING FOR UNHCR, SHOWED CONCERN, WHICH WAS SHARED BY U.S. CONGEN AND HONG KONG IMMIGRATION, ALTHOUGH FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

D. U.S. OFFICIALS WORRIED THAT PROBLEM OF ACCOMMODATION MIGHT INDUCE HONG KONG AUTHORITIES TO BE RESTRICTIVE IN GRANTING ASYLUM TO FUTURE BOAT CASES. APPREHENSION HAS EVEN STRONGER BASIS BECAUSE OF IMPORTANCE ATTACHED BY SOME U.S. CONSULAR OFFICIALS TO PROPOSAL BY FATHER LANCELOT RODRIGUEZ THAT ISLAND IN MACAU SERVE AS "VIETNAMESE REFUGEE CENTER."

E. HONG KONG OFFICIAL POSITION IS WELL KNOWN: WHILE THEY WISH TO BE HUMANITARIAN IN OUTLOOK AND POLICY, LOCAL (CHINESE) SENSITIVITIES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, SOMETIMES IN EXAGGERATED FASHION. WHILE WILLING TO CONFIDENTIAL

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COOPERATE, HONG KONG AUTHORITIES INSIST BOAT CASE PROBLEM BE DEALT WITH INSIDE TERRITORY AND WITHOUT UNDUE PUBLICITY.

F. I HAVE EXPLAINED TO U.S. CONGEN THAT ASYLUM POLICY OF HONG KONG AUTHORITIES CANNOT BE DETERMINED BY AVAILABLE ACCOMMODATION, THOUGH LATTER HAS SOME INFLUENCE ON FORMER. SECONDLY, REFUGEES GENERALLY AND VIETNAMESE IN THIS CASE, ARE RESPONSIBILITY OF ASYLUM GOVERNMENT AND ANY UNHCR ACTION SUCH AS CARE AND MAINTENANCE IS TO ASSIST GOVERNMENT CONCERNED IN FULFILLING ITS OBLIGATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND UNIVERSAL PRACTICE. THUS, SHOULD UNHCR FAIL TO FIND ADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION, I WILL HAVE RECOURSE TO APPROACH HONG KONG GOVERNMENT. I TOOK SIMILAR POSITION DURING MEETING WITH DIRECTOR OF HONG KONG IMMIGRATION.

G. WHILE IN HONG KONG, I VISITED CHEUNG CHAU ISLAND, MET AND DISCUSSED WITH DIRECTOR OF HONG KONG IMMIGRATION, ACTING U.S. CONGEN AND HIS OFFICERS, ICEM AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSONS. BUILDINGS AND SITES AVAILABLE

ON ISLAND CONSIDERED TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE, BUT DURING DISCUSSIONS, NEW DIRECTOR OF HONG KONG IMMIGRATION FELT SPECIAL BUILDING OR CAMP ON ISLAND WOULD STIR UP PUBLIC CURIOSITY AND CREATE POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES. THEREFORE, I RULE OUT CHEUNG CHAU ISLAND PROPOSAL.

H. I HAVE ALTERNATE PROPOSAL WHICH I DISCUSSED BRIEFLY WITH HONG KONG IMMIGRATION AND ACTING U.S. CONGEN AND HIS OFFICERS. FOLLOWING FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 GENEVA 06728

HONG KONG ALSO FOR INS DIDIR

1. GLOBAL INCREASE IN BOAT PEOPLE IN AREA INDICATE SIMILAR INCREASE POSSIBLE FOR HONG KONG ARRIVALS. THEREFORE, EXISTING ACCOMMODATIONS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE INADEQUATE.

2. MAIN RESETTLEMENT COUNTRY, U.S., HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

3. OFFER OF ISLAND IN MACAU APPEARS GENUINE AND THEREFORE MERITS SERIOUS EXAMINATION.

4. IN MY ASSESSMENT, HONG KONG AUTHORITIES WILL BE MORE HELPFUL THAN ONE EXPECTS SHOULD REAL CRISIS DEVELOP.

I. THE PROPOSAL: ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS SHOULD BE

LOOKED FOR IN HONG KONG, KOWLOON, AND THE NEW
TERRITORIES. MACAU PROPOSAL SHOULD BE STUDIED ON
THE SPOT. ACCORDING TO FATHER LANCELOT, FACILITIES
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ARE READILY AVAILABLE AT MOMENT'S NOTICE TO ACCOMMODATE
200 TO 300 PERSONS ON MACAU; THIS TO BE CHECKED. SHOULD
ARRIVAL RATE ASSUME SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS AND
ACCOMMODATIONS IN HONG KONG PROVE INADEQUATE, MACAU
FACILITIES SHOULD BE UTILIZED BY TRANSFERRING VIETNAMESE
ALREADY PROCESSED WHOSE DEPARTURE TO UNKNOWN DESTINATION
DELAYED FOR DEFINITE PERIOD.

J. MERITS OF PROPOSAL: ASYLUM POLICY OF HONG KONG
AUTHORITIES WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED. FEARS EXPRESSED
BY U.S. WOULD BE ALLAYED AND UNHCR WOULD HAVE TAKEN
INTO CONSIDERATION MACAU OFFER. CONTINGENCY PLAN
WOULD BE READY, BUT JUDGING FROM PRESENT MOOD OF HONG
KONG AUTHORITIES SUCH PLAN WILL HOPEFULLY NOT BE
EXECUTED.

K. STRONG SENTIMENTS OF HONG KONG IMMIGRATION TO
CONFINE PROBLEM TO HONG KONG ITSELF LED ME NOT TO PLACE
EMPHASIS ON COST CONSIDERATIONS IN LOOKING FOR ALTERNATE
ACCOMMODATION. END PARAPHRASE.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH CERTAIN PORTIONS OF FOREGOING
NOTE, AND PARTICULARLY LAST PARAGRAPH, ARE SOMEWHAT
UNCLEAR TO MISSION, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT UNHCR IN
PERSON OF SAMPAKUMAR IS INDEED TAKING LEAD ON
TRANSIENT CENTER QUESTION. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN
WHAT WILL EMERGE FROM HIS DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT
WITH HEADQUARTERS. PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE SEEMS TO BE
ONE OF TIMING. IN DISCUSSING SUBJECT WITH MACE, IT
EMERGED THAT UNHCR INCLINES TO BELIEVE THAT PROPOSAL
SHOULD BE ACTIVELY ADDRESSED ONLY WHEN THERE ARE POSITIVE
INDICATIONS THAT NUMBERS OF REFUGEES ON HAND WILL
ACTUALLY EXCEED AVAILABLE ACCOMMODATIONS. END COMMENT.

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4. MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE MATTER AND REPORT
AS FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE. VANDEN HEUVEL

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